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Encourages "nondestructive" stem cell research

Sen. Shafer introduces *Saving the Cure Act*

ATLANTA -- Together with 29 cosponsors, State Sen. David Shafer (R-Duluth) today introduced legislation that encourages "nondestructive stem cell research" involving stem cells from the umbilical cord, placental tissue and amniotic fluid.

"The umbilical cord, placental tissue and amniotic fluid are rich in stem cells that may be used for medical research and treatment without destroying human life at any stage of development," Sen. Shafer said. "Unfortunately, these postnatal tissues and fluids routinely are treated as medical waste. They should be saved and not thrown away."

Sen. Shafer's bill, known as *Saving the Cure Act*, calls for the universal collection of postnatal tissue and fluid for medical research and treatment. The bill is named in honor of Keone Penn, a young man from Gwinnett County who was cured of sickle cell anemia by a stem cell treatment from a donated umbilical cord.

Senate Bill 148 will create the *Georgia Commission for Saving the Cure*, charging it with the promotion of nondestructive stem cell research and oversight of the Georgia Newborn Umbilical Cord Blood Bank. Furthermore, the bill will give every Georgia mother the opportunity to donate her postnatal tissue and fluid to the bank.

Sen. Shafer's measure does not include embryonic stem cell research which involves the extraction of stem cells from developing human embryos in a process that destroys the embryo. He said that embryonic stem cells, which have yet to be developed into any medical treatments, are "difficult to control in the laboratory and often mutate into dangerous cancers."

"Nondestructive stem cell research is more effective at treating disease, without the ethical controversy," Sen. Shafer said. "Nondestructive stem cell research has yielded dozens of treatments and cures, compared to zero for destructive embryonic research."

The legislation has been assigned to the Senate Science and Technology Committee. Sponsors of the bill include Senate President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson, Senate Majority Leader Tommie Williams, Senate Health and Human Services Chairman Don Thomas, and Senate Science and Technology Committee Chairman Cecil Staton.

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Senator David Shafer is Chairman of the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. He represents the 48th Senate District which includes parts of Fulton and Gwinnett Counties. He may be reached at 404-656-0048 or via email at David.Shafer@senate.ga.gov.